

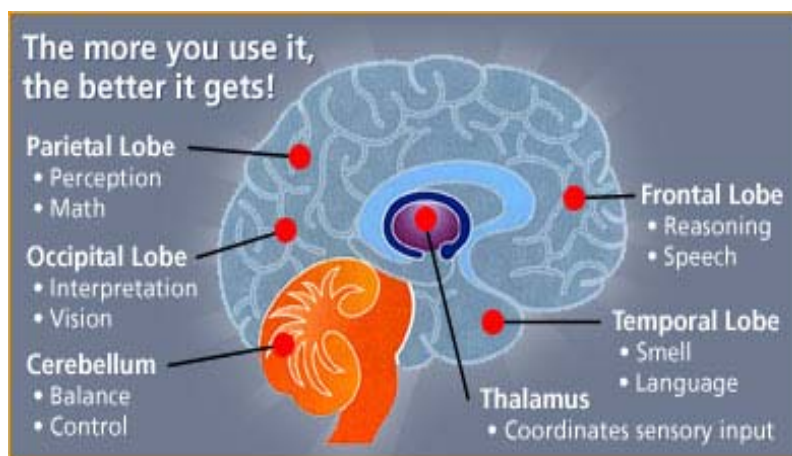


Infant/ Toddler Info/ Tattler

Early Intervention Services News

September 2006

EDIS Early Intervention Team Newsletter



Educational and Developmental Intervention Services

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*Guess What????!! This newsletter is now
available online at:*

www.atsugi.navy.mil/medical/EDIS/index.html

*IT² is a free publication. For additional
copies, questions or comments, please contact
us at either of the numbers listed above*

EDIS Developmental Screening

Whether you have concerns about your child's development or are just curious about your child's skills, call us for a free developmental screening. For more information, please call us.

Development: How Does a Baby's Brain Develop?

From www.civitas.org

Use It or Lose It

We now know that babies who get lots of love and attention actually learn better. This is because brain development depends on the way the brain is used and the extent to which it is used. Every experience excites certain neural circuits in the brain and leaves others inactive. Those circuits that are consistently excited by experience are strengthened while others that are not stimulated are weakened.

The Nature/Nurture Debate

Nature (genes) and nurture (experience) interact at every step of brain development but play different roles.

- Genes provide the basic wiring plan. They are responsible for the formation of brain cells and the connections between brain regions.

- Experience fine-tunes the architecture of the brain, through a streamlining process, which determines which circuits will be kept and which will be discarded.

A Caregiver's Role

Because most of a baby's experience involves his relationship with his caregiver, a newborn comes into the world eager for interaction. He wants to connect with you, right from the beginning, and it is this emotional connection that helps give him the confidence he needs to learn. From the very first moments of life with a baby, the love and attention that you share with him will lay the groundwork for the kind of adult that he will become.

How To Nurture a Child's Brain

The everyday things you offer a baby give her the comfort and security that helps promote learning:

1. Love and affection: Giving your child love and attention helps her feel confident, relaxed, and happy, which in turn, impacts the development of her intellectual capacity.
2. A predictable world: Providing routines and consistent responses gives a baby a sense that the world is trustworthy and teaches him that he can depend on you.
3. Opportunities for fun: Activities that most encourage a child's brain to grow are those that she enjoys. If she is forced to participate in activities that do not hold her interest, she will tune out.
4. The sound of your voice: The newborn brain is especially interested in sounds-the building blocks of speech and language. Whatever you say, let a baby hear your voices as much as possible.
5. Understanding and patience: Respond to baby's fusses or cries without worrying that you will spoil him. By responding, you teach him that you care and that he can trust you to read his signals.
6. Time to digest what she's learned: Beware of over-stimulation. If a child is exposed to a lot of new information without time to digest and process it, she will tune out or breakdown.

Play: Why is it Important?

Children spend the vast majority of their waking hours at play. Yet play is not simply a way for children to pass time. Instead, it is an important way for children to learn about their world and develop emotionally, socially and intellectually.

What is Play?

Play is whatever a child wants it to be. There's no one way to play; what matters is that a child is given safe toys in safe places and is encouraged to experiment.

Play is one of the primary ways a child discovers her world. It allows her to explore and express herself, to learn on her own, control her environment, connect with other people and make sense of her surroundings.

Play is a form of communication. From birth, playful, loving interaction between an infant and caregiver teaches a baby to trust and builds a strong, secure relationship between a baby and his caregiver. A caregiver's smile, touch and affection are a playground for a baby.

Helping a Child at Play

1. Jump right in. Playtime with a caregiver is invaluable. Whether you talk baby talk or bounce a toddler on your knee, you are building the foundation of strong, trusting relationships and are helping him to become a happy and loving person.

2. Forget the rules. Toys and games have possibilities beyond their intended use, and they greatly affect a child's imagination, skills and development when play with creatively. Explore freely and encourage a child to make believe.



3. Think more like a child. Add to a child's play experiences by creating imaginative games and new ways to use his toys. Use blocks as flying cars or pretend to be a zoo animal.

4. Take a break. Although children often learn the most when they interact with others, solitary play gives a child time to process and understand everything that he has been doing. Watch the child. If he is

happy, leave him alone. If he seems bored, help him find new ways to play.

5. Participate enthusiastically. By becoming involved wholeheartedly in a child's play and going along with her games, you encourage her imagination and ability to make believe. By taking her play seriously, you help her feel important about herself.

6. Let a child guide his play. Let a child pick the activity and decide how it is played. When he is ready to move on to another game, he will let you know. Pay attention to the child's mood and adapt the play accordingly. This will help him feel comfortable and give him confidence to learn.

THE BEST FOR MY BABY

From www.Jjpi.com

Q. What are the best ways to help my baby grow up happy and healthy?

A. The infant brain is wired to learn by interacting with parents and caregivers while exploring the physical world. Researchers have found that one of the best activities you can do with your baby is the simplest – play with him. Talk to him about everything around you. Smile and make faces with him. Play your favorite music. As he grows older, play peek-a-boo and read picture books, sort socks by color, build with blocks and go for walks. Do not worry that your child will "fall behind" if you do not buy the most current toy or go to baby exercise class or teach him to read by age three. Being relaxed enough to follow his lead may be the very best advice you can follow.

Q. What does it mean to "follow my baby's lead?"

A. Babies' brains develop in stages. As each part of the brain develops, the baby

develops new skills and interests and needs new and different types of stimulation. Let your baby show you how to give her exactly the stimulation she needs to help her develop the different areas of her brain. When you spend relaxed, unplanned time with your child, she will draw you into games and activities that fascinate her – and are

perfect for her current stage of development, whatever it may be.

Q. How does music affect the brain? Can Mozart make my child smarter?

A. Music appears to shape the synaptic connections in an infant's brain, as does all patterned, repetitive sensory stimulation. The parts of the brain that are influenced by music are the thinking and problem-solving processes. Some studies suggest that some forms of music (Mozart, for example) may be more effective than others. Other studies, however, indicate that rhythmic patterned music of any type – rock, blues, jazz or classical – will have a positive impact on the developing brain.

Q. What about television?

A. Babies learn best when they are engaged in an ongoing relationship with the world around them – I smile at Dad and he smiles back, Mom tickles my toes and I pull away. Television, in contrast, does not pick up on a baby's cues or respond to his reactions, and so babies do not learn much from it. Researchers have found that babies do not learn language from television. Exposed to the same amount of time with an adult who talks to them, however, they gain language skills. So letting children watch endless unsupervised hours of television on a regular basis – in place of other types of activities – is not a good idea. In addition, it encourages passivity instead of active engagement, and sitting instead of moving, playing and developing motor and social skills. However, if limited to an hour or so a day, restricted to quality children's shows and if you watch along with him to make comments and answer questions, television is a reasonable addition to a full spectrum of activities.

Q. What about toys and videos that are designed to help a child's brain develop?

A. They are not necessary. Infants have been developing rich, structured, well-organized brains without such videos and toys for millennia. In fact, infants find their parents to be the very best toy possible. Your child may enjoy expensive, age-appropriate toys designed by experts. However a pile of blocks, a set of pans and spoons, a cardboard box and your playful companionship can provide opportunities for fun and growth.